

THE ARTS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AT BOURNEMOUTH

Regulatory Framework for Taught Postgraduate Courses

1. General principles: units, credits and levels

- 1 The Framework is based on self-contained blocks of learning, known as units, each of which has a coherent set of aims and learning outcomes, and associated assessment processes.
- 2 The result of each unit is expressed as a series of Learning Outcomes. Attainment of these is the objective of the unit; measuring their attainment is the purpose of assessment. The expression of unit objectives as Learning Outcomes, and how they are assessed, is included within each unit descriptor and published for students.
- 3 Whilst units may be related by sequence or content, each unit is free-standing and results in an assessment of defined learning outcomes within the period of the unit.
- 4 All units are described in a common and consistent manner detailing their level, credit rating, aims, learning outcomes, assessment components and assessment criteria. This information is contained within a formal unit descriptor, which is considered and approved at validation. There is no standard definition of delivery methods, except that these should be appropriate to the stated learning outcomes. In addition, Unit Handbooks give details about start date, the timing and nature of taught sessions, delivery methods, resource access, assessment component submission date, and the date for assessment feedback.
- 5 All units are credit-rated. The University College's Credit Framework is compatible with other frameworks in operation across the UK HE sector, and accords with the Higher education credit framework¹. Such compatibility helps to provide a standardised framework within which relative achievement can be considered.
- 6 'Notional learning hours' are used to describe the size of a unit, and indicate the length of learning time which it is estimated will be taken, on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes. This includes all the study time for the unit including contact hours (lectures, demonstrations, seminars, tutorials etc), directed study, independent study, and assessment activity (including preparation). In accordance with practice across the UK higher education sector, one credit is allocated for ten notional learning hours.
- 7 A student successfully completing any unit is awarded the full amount of credit assigned to that unit. The amount of credit is determined by the size of the unit, ie the amount of time required to complete the learning and assessment for the unit. The standard unit is worth 20 credits (i.e. a volume of 200 notional study hours).
- 8 The award of credit indicates the achievement of the threshold standard or better within the unit. Credit is wholly allocated on a pass/fail basis. All learning outcomes must be passed for an overall pass to be awarded in the unit. There are no circumstances in which partial credit can be awarded for partial completion or success in particular components or elements of a unit.
- 9 Credit is not used for grading, but quantifies the volume of learning and is thus used to determine eligibility for awards.
- 10 Credit also facilitates transfer between courses and / or institutions by providing an accessible record of achievement. It permits transfer across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), with each credit worth 0.5 ECTS credits.
- 11 Once awarded, credit cannot be taken away or withdrawn as it represents the recognition of achievement. Even if students fail overall the course for which they are registered or do not complete it, they retain the credit gained and may use it as the basis for negotiating future study at the University College or another provider. (The only exception to this is where the results of a unit are amended or annulled following a proven case of academic misconduct; see assessment regulations.)
- 12 In accordance with the Higher Education credit framework, all units are attributed to a level.

¹ see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/standardsandquality/credit/default.asp>

Postgraduate taught units are all at Level 7, although postgraduate courses may include up to 60 credits from Level 6 in exceptional cases. (Level 6 is the equivalent of the final year of an Honours degree.) The University College has developed level descriptors, which conform to the descriptors in the Higher Education Credit Framework, and indicate the typical requirements of units at each level.

- 13 The Level Descriptor for postgraduate courses at the University College is given at section D. Level Descriptors give the general characteristics associated with an award at this level and provides a template against which units (or the progression of units through a level) and their learning outcomes may be aligned. The key determining factor in ascribing a level is the complexity of the assessment component. Hence two units which appear similar in content may be at different levels if the assessment components differ.
- 14 If a student is admitted with advanced standing, no credit is awarded against units of study to which their previous certificated learning or experience is deemed equivalent, and which they are not required to take. General level 7 credit is awarded in these cases.

2. General principles: named courses and named awards

- 15 The standard of an award is safeguarded by regulations which define requirements for minimum amounts of credit necessary at a given level to satisfy the requirement for that award.
- 16 The following awards are available:
Master of Architecture (MArch)
Master of Arts (MA named subject)
Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip named subject)
Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert named subject).
- 17 For Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert), a minimum of 60 credits must be gained at Level 7. A PGCert will be awarded to any student who leaves their course of study having successfully completed 60 credits at Level 7. Any credit undertaken at Level 6, as part of an agreed postgraduate taught programme, cannot contribute to the credit required for a PGCert.
- 18 For Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip), a minimum of 120 credits must be gained at Level 7. A PGDip will be awarded to any student who leaves their course of study having successfully completed 120 credits at Level 7. Any credit undertaken at Level 6, as part of an agreed postgraduate taught programme, cannot contribute to the credit required for a PGDip.
- 19 For a Master of Arts (MA), a minimum of 180 credits must be gained, of which a minimum of 120 credits must be at Level 7.
For a Master of Architecture (MArch), a minimum of 240 credits must be gained, of which a minimum of 180 credits must be at Level 7.
- 20 Students who do not achieve their target qualification will normally be offered an intermediate (or “exit”) award which reflects the volume and level of credit they have successfully achieved during their period of study, as articulated above. A student may also opt for an intermediate award if he/she is withdrawing from the University College, and has completed the requisite credit. Certain qualifying conditions may apply, either with regard to the award or its title.
- 21 Courses will be designed in accordance with the general requirements for credit, and will stipulate any requirements specific to that course which students will have to meet in order to qualify for the award.
- 22 Validated courses may acknowledge distinctive performance. A distinction may only be offered for successful completion of a full Masters course (MArch or MA), for students who have achieved overall average mark of 65%, and a mark of 70% or above in a majority of credits (with units weighted according to their size). Only units at Level 7 are included in this calculation.

These same principles apply to a student admitted with advanced standing.

3. Admission, Registration, and Progression

- 23 The Arts University College at Bournemouth has established an Admissions Policy which is reviewed annually by Academic Board. Minimum entry criteria are included as an appendix to this Policy. The Admissions Policy is available from the Registry, and is published on the intranet.
- 24 All students shall be registered for the named final award to which their course of study leads. All courses, and therefore students, shall be the responsibility of a named School and Faculty.
- 25 The Framework permits both full-time and part-time modes of study. A course can be offered in full-time mode, part-time mode or both. A part-time course of study will in all cases be longer than the minimum full-time duration defined for the award.
- 26 The minimum period of registration for all postgraduate awards shall be two postgraduate phases of study (see precept 38 below). The maximum credit awarded through the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning towards the fulfilment of postgraduate awards will not normally be more than one third of the total credit required for the postgraduate award.
- 27 The maximum period of registration for an MArch is five years; for a Masters is four years; for a Postgraduate Diploma three years; and for a Postgraduate Certificate two years.
- 28 Normally, full-time students on the MA will complete three successive phase of study and will complete in one year. Full-time students on the MArch will normally complete two phase of study per year and will complete in two years.
- 29 Students are permitted to change their mode of study where this is available as part of the course. Any proposal for a change of mode of study must be approved by the Head of School.
- 30 Students may normally only change modes of study before commencement of a phase of study.
- 31 Progression through the course is automatic on successful completion of the course units. Students awarded a Referral or Retake will normally be permitted to continue to the next unit of the course, but with the condition that the outstanding unit(s) must be retrieved. Decisions regarding termination of studies may only be made by the Examination Board. Arrangements for withdrawal and intermission are detailed within the relevant sections of the PG Regulations.

4. Curriculum structure

- 32 The Framework provides a structure which enables collaboration and complementarity across the University College's postgraduate awards, such that students are enabled to work together on projects and units of mutual relevance and value.
- 33 A course will be divided into units which will normally be structured to align with the phase of study structure (ie for a full-time course, units will not normally run across more than one phase of study). For the award of the MArch or MA, the course will normally include a summative project or thesis unit.
- 34 The smallest building block within the postgraduate award is the standard unit of 20 credits. Units may be built only in full multiples of the single unit. The regulatory framework does not permit half units, or multiples involving half units.
- 35 The largest available building block in the postgraduate award is normally 60 credits. Exceptionally one 80 credit unit may be approved.
- 36 There must be an appropriate balance of study, so courses will be structured in such a way to ensure an equitable workload across the academic year.
- 37 Courses may offer optional units, which may include units from other disciplines. The range of optional units available will be considered and approved at validation or periodic review. In addition, an independent study unit is available on most courses, subject to the agreement of the Course Leader, which enables a student to develop his/her own programme of activity and agreed learning outcomes.

5. Study time

- 38 The postgraduate academic year at the Arts University College is divided into three phases of study, each of fifteen weeks. These will normally commence in October, February and June.
- 39 Teaching and assessment will fall within the specified taught time, although students who have not completed the full balance of credit during the scheduled teaching time may be required to retrieve outstanding units during untaught time.
- 40 The Framework permits educational visits where they take place during the agreed weeks of study, and are arranged in accordance within the Educational Visits Guidance². Arrangements for educational visits, work placement and other activity off campus must permit other units normally taught at that time to be studied appropriately.
- 41 Student exchange is permitted, in accordance with the University College's Student Exchange Policy. The way in which the outcomes of the Exchange will be assessed, and will contribute to the student's overall academic profile, must be agreed in advance of the Exchange taking place.
- 42 Except where explicitly approved by ASQ, all periods of work placement activity must fall within the agreed weeks of study, and are not additional to it. All such activities must be approved by the Course Leader as providing relevant knowledge or experience to support the student's overall learning on the course. Placement units may be undertaken during the summer vacation where necessary, but the total study time should be no more than the standard agreed teaching weeks. Periods of work placement activity must be arranged in accordance with the [Work Placement Policy](#).
- 43 Where possible and appropriate, part-time courses will be aligned to the full-time offer to secure maximum cross-cohort engagement and provide the best possible student learning experience. However, part-time students will not be expected to study more than an average 20 hours per week.

6. Curriculum content

- 44 All degrees have an element of career planning and development within the discipline, and offer students the chance to reflect on their learning and professional development. The Framework does not require this to be assessed, but it may be included if this falls within the course assessment strategy.
- 45 The Framework recognises the importance of the demonstration of independent learning as a key feature of postgraduate awards. To enable Masters students to demonstrate the scope and depth of learning required of a full award at this level, the final phase of study will typically comprise a 60 credit project unit, with the outcomes demonstrated through the study plan or learning agreement.
- 47 The final project unit may not be replaced by a period of work experience, AP(E)L or any other activity.
- 48 Optional units, either within the discipline or more broadly across the postgraduate taught offer, can offer students the potential to specialise within areas of particular interest. This may result in a different named award, or simply a dedicated route through one award.

7. Assessment

- 49 Assessment components should enable all learning outcomes for a unit to be assessed through summative assessment. The assessment components for each unit are included within the unit descriptor, amplified within the Unit Handbook, which will clarify which components are formative, and which are summative.
- 50 Normally, there will be no more than one assessment component for each standard unit of 20 credits and no more than two assessment components for any unit. Where two summative

² The Educational Visits Guidance, Checklist and Risk Assessment is available via the intranet
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assessment components are used, a percentage weighting must be given to each. All assessment components should be explicitly defined in a written brief, or where appropriate through the learning agreement. Formative assessment components must also be listed, and the contribution to the student learning experience must be explicit.

- 51 Any grouping of assessable activities into one “portfolio” assessment component must specifically identify the required elements and should reflect an appropriate level of complexity and scale commensurate with the credit weighting of the unit. A maximum number of pieces to be submitted should be identified within the unit descriptor, with a minimum also given where this is essential to demonstrate breadth as well as depth of learning. The overall assessment component must be a coherent, integrated submission, and the portfolio must respond to one brief, even where this may have more than one required element.
- 52 Wherever possible, assessment methods should be flexible to encourage achievement by students with a variety of strengths and learning styles. This may include alternative forms of submission within one unit, each meeting the specified learning outcomes, or may be delivered through the range of methods used across course units.
- 53 It is permitted, under the regulations, for an assessment component to be replaced by an alternative form of submission, where it can be demonstrated that this also meets the stated learning outcomes and assessment criteria and where the student learning experience, and assessment, is equivalent. The Course Leader is responsible for ensuring equivalence, in consultation with the Chair of the Examination Board.
- 54 Every student is entitled to feedback which should be constructive and contribute to the student’s learning and development. Comment should relate to learning outcomes and should substantiate the mark given in the context of the grading matrix.

8. Recording and reflecting on progress

- 55 Students are entitled to regular information about their progress through the course. The Tutorial Policy makes clear the arrangements for academic guidance tutorials.
- 56 A transcript recording individual achievement will be issued by Registry to the student at the end of the course of study. The transcript conforms to the European Diploma Supplement requirements.

9. Managing delivery

- 57 Courses will be designed to facilitate formal and informal opportunities for complementary work across disciplines and courses.
- 58 Whilst units have a volume defined by the time required to achieve their stated learning outcomes, they have no intrinsic ‘shape’. The pattern of study is specified only by points at which teaching is delivered and periods when access to facilities occur within the overall duration of the unit. The use of independent study time, which tends to increase throughout the course, is extremely flexible (when not strictly related to the provision of technical resources).
- 59 To deliver this flexibility, the accurate scheduling of student groups against fixed resources (staffing, accommodation and equipment) is required, through a standardised timetabling system visible across the entire range of named courses. This is further necessary to monitor effectively study patterns and deliver the best possible levels of resource utilisation.
- 60 The Framework provides a central structure for scheduling all academic activities. It allows academic courses to be constructed as a series of intensive study blocks, a group of longer concurrent syllabi or a combination of both.
- 61 A unit may be heavily taught at the outset, followed by an independent study project with a handing-in date in advance of the conclusion of the unit to allow marking or another form of assessment to be conducted (eg small group seminars for the purpose of a peer evaluation element). In determining the completion time for a unit, the following guidelines must be observed:
- i. No activity related to the assessment outcome of a unit can be programmed into the remaining period following assessment of that unit.

- ii. Early completion cannot be used to facilitate the early start of another unit.
- iii. The overall study load placed on students does not give rise to unreasonable peaks and troughs through the truncation of delivery times within units.

62 Each School will operate a Postgraduate Examination Board, which will approve the outcomes for individual units and make recommendations for award, or where appropriate for the termination of studies. The Postgraduate Examination Board will meet at least once per annum, but may also hold an interim meeting to review student performance. Where appropriate, the Postgraduate Examination Board may be run as a joint Board between both schools within a faculty, or for all four schools.

The Progression and Awards Board will meet as required to consider the recommendations of Postgraduate Examination Boards. A meeting will be held as soon as is practical once recommendations for award have been received from the Postgraduate Examination Boards.

63 Academic Board, through Academic Standards and Quality Committee, will establish and amend from time to time the academic structures required to underpin the University College Postgraduate Framework. Details of the Examination Boards required for the operation of the assessment regulations are outlined in the assessment regulations: See <http://intranet.aucb.ac.uk/academicregulations> for further information on assessment regulations.

64 The senior management team of the University College will establish, and may amend from time to time, the management structures required for the operation of the Framework.

10. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

65 Academic Standards and Quality Committee has overall responsibility for the arrangements for the quality assurance and enhancement of the University College's academic provision. The University College employs a number of measures to ensure that all courses are regularly reviewed, and their quality assured and enhanced.

66 Processes for quality assurance and enhancement are themselves subject to regular review by the Committee and are detailed in the HE Quality Assurance Handbook, which is published annually.